

## **Selling (through) politeness: advertising provincial shops in eighteenth-century England**

### **Abstract**

Drawing on a survey of newspaper advertisements and trade cards from the Midlands and north-west England, this paper examines the ways in which eighteenth-century advertisements helped to spread notions of politeness. It argues that advertisements were structured by and drew upon the conventions, norms and language of politeness to sell goods and promote shops. At the same time they helped to reproduce and communicate these ideas to a wider public. This had both material and conceptual dimensions: advertisements sold 'polite' goods and a 'polite' lifestyle, but they were also representations of politeness, signifying its ideals to a burgeoning middle class.

### **Key words**

advertising; newspapers; trade cards; politeness; eighteenth-century England

## Selling (through) politeness: advertising provincial shops in eighteenth-century England

In 1775, the Knutsford upholsterer J. Meller, advertised his services in the following terms:

J. MELLER, Upholsterer,

H U M B L Y begs Leave to inform the Nobility, Gentry and others, in the Town and Neighbourhood of Knutsford, That he has opened his Upholstery Warehouse, in Princes-Street, Knutsford, opposite the back Part of the George-Inn; where he purposes carrying on the Upholstery Business, in all its different Branches. As he has had the Advantage of being for some Time in some of the most capital Shops in London, he makes no Doubt but he has acquired sufficient Share of Knowledge in the various Parts of his Business as to render him capable of executing any Part of it with Skill and Exactness

Those who please to favour him with their Commands, may depend upon having them executed in the neatest manner, and on the very lowest terms.

N.B. Great Variety of the most fashionable paper-Hangings.<sup>1</sup>

This advertisement speaks volumes about the spaces and practices of consumption in eighteenth-century provincial England. It appeals to the desires and aspirations of the middling and ‘better’ sorts of eighteenth-century provincial society: an increasingly wealthy and numerous set of consumers drawn together through notions of politeness and gentility. Moreover, it suggests that such status could be attained and signalled, *inter alia*, through a new urban material culture, which was commercially available, not only in large and fashionable centres, but also in ordinary towns.<sup>2</sup> With its appeal to the nobility and gentry, and use of carefully crafted and deferential prose, Meller’s advertisement drew on polite tropes familiar to the readership of provincial newspapers. In highlighting his London connections, the importance of fashion, and his ability to meet the needs of discerning customers, he situated himself within a broader milieu of polite shopping.<sup>3</sup> Yet, Meller was also located in a

commercial world: the rhetoric of persuasion pervaded an advertisement which sought to communicate information about his skills and his wares, and ultimately to increase sales. If he felt any awkwardness in his position on the intersection between politeness and commerce, then this is not evident from the confident, if carefully worded, tone of his notice. Rather, it seems clear that Meller saw benefits in linking these two realms, both for his business and his wider reputation and standing in the community. What, though, were these benefits, and how did advertisements such as this link wider understandings of and engagement with politeness?

Politeness was a term often used in eighteenth-century England to describe individuals, attributes and even the era in which people lived. Yet it was a mutable, slippery and contested concept with fluid meanings that changed over time and were variously portrayed by different commentators. For Shaftesbury and others it was a model of behaviour which distinguished and justified the position of a gentlemanly elite. Within such constructions, polite status was indicated by a set of mental and material attributes which marked social distinction by signalling the taste and discernment of the individual.<sup>4</sup> Courtesy writers suggested that gentlemen should maintain their rank through manners – highlighting dignity, easy assurance, repression of emotional display and distinguished speech – whilst gentlewomen should have ‘dignified ease and graceful control’, good table manners and diverting conversation. For both men and women, consumption and the construction of an appropriate material culture were essential in distinguishing their status as polite.<sup>5</sup> In these readings, politeness was to be differentiated from vulgarity, rusticity, barbarity, and utility. Other commentators, such as Addison and Steele, viewed politeness in rather more practical terms: as a means of oiling the wheels of commercial and social interaction, helping to smooth over traditional distinctions of status and origin.<sup>6</sup> The manners of tradesmen and merchants would be refined as they sold their wares, whilst the language of commerce in part ‘developed out of the patrician manners of the landed elites’.<sup>7</sup> Again, politeness was linked to consumption, but this time the emphasis was on inclusiveness and complaisance. Moreover, it was a two-way relationship: politeness informed the practices and language of consumption, yet was predicated on the possession of particular material and mental

trappings. From this perspective, the actions of shopkeepers and professionals in selling their wares and their services are locked firmly into polite discourse.

One key aspect of this polite-commercial discourse was advertising through the printed media. That eighteenth-century advertising was widespread and increasingly sophisticated is a commonplace. Early work by Walker, McKendrick, and Mui and Mui has hardly caused an avalanche of interest, but the basic parameters of newspaper advertising in particular are well established.<sup>8</sup> Newspaper advertisements became more numerous through the eighteenth century, perhaps as the apparent stigma of earlier decades was replaced by a growing recognition of their commercial importance, but also because the growing number of provincial broadsheets afforded greater opportunities.<sup>9</sup> Whilst advertisements for books and patent medicines formed the largest proportion, Ferdinand's analysis of the *Salisbury Journal* reveals that they declined in relative numbers through the middle decades of the century: from around 45 per cent in the 1740s to less than 30 per cent by the 1760s. Over the same period, notices placed by local tradesmen and professionals offering goods, services or leisure activities grew from 17 to 28 per cent. Most of these advertisements were linked to the individual, rather than the product – the celebrated George Packwood was unusual in this regard.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, it is argued that it was only with the introduction (in the nineteenth century) of 'new and formerly unknown goods into the market [that] a need arose for advertising which provided the customer with information about the product, not just where it could be found'.<sup>11</sup> However, the personal nature of eighteenth-century advertisements does not mean that products were irrelevant. As we shall see, the nature, provenance, quality and price of goods was central to many advertisements.

The purpose served by advertising is a knotty question, as much for present-day marketing executives as for historians of business, retailing and material culture, and this is not the place to consider in detail all of the various possibilities.<sup>12</sup> At a basic level, advertisements are about communicating what is available and from where. They seek to provide information to the consumer in order to attract more business and to reduce the transaction costs involved in selling goods and services.<sup>13</sup> We do not need to accept the entire conceptual framework of new institutional economics to recognise the importance of disseminating information to the success of any retail business. This

information came via previous experience, personal interaction, informal social networks, or browsing in the shop itself. But it also came through reading advertisements in newspapers and on trade cards which were often packed with information on the range, type and quality of goods available. These lengthy lists served not only to inform consumers about the availability of goods; as with shop interiors, they were also a signifier or representation of the retail business and, more generally, the world of goods.<sup>14</sup> Richards argues that the development of a 'specific representational order of advertising' occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century, its origins in Britain lying in the Great Exhibition of 1851. This may be true, in that eighteenth-century advertisements primarily focused on goods and people rather than a broader notion of the 'modern world and culture'.<sup>15</sup> However, I want to argue that they can also be seen as representations of certain forms of polite (as well as commercial) society and culture. At one level, they sought to attract trade by creating a 'positive impression on the minds of the consuming public'.<sup>16</sup> Such an impression was highly dependent upon interaction which took place in the shop, and it could be carried into the home of the privileged consumer through the use of trade cards and head bills. But it was projected out into a very public arena through newspaper advertisements which drew on the norms and language of civility and politeness. At a second level, and perhaps less consciously, advertisements communicated and signified some of the wider values of polite society. They might thus be seen as part of a broader process, noted by Berg, wherein the commercial-minded were civilised through repeated exposure to polite norms, and drawing a wider social circle into the bounds of the polite.<sup>17</sup>

These are the ideas that form the focus of this paper. In it, I want to explore the ways in which advertisements – like the shopkeepers and professionals who created them – occupied a kind of liminal space between politeness and commerce. Attempts to investigate advertising in this way are surprisingly few in number and invariably appear as part of analyses focussed on other issues: Barker considers the polite language of newspaper advertisements as part of her study of Georgian businesswomen and Berry explores something of this in the context of the provincial press in north-east England; Berg touches on the form and function of trade cards in her analysis of luxury consumption, as does Walsh in her work on London shops.<sup>18</sup> I want to build on this work by exploring

in detail the subject, composition, language and appearance of eighteenth-century trade cards and newspaper advertisements. The latter are taken from a sample of newspapers published in towns of various sizes across the Midlands and north-west England. To allow analysis of change over time, these cover a range of dates from the 1740s to the 1790s.<sup>19</sup> I begin by exploring the ways in which the values and language of politeness pervaded the newspaper advertisements and trade cards, and how they were used by shopkeepers and professionals to promote their businesses. But I want to go further than this and investigate the ways in which advertisements helped to spread the material and behavioural underpinnings of politeness. This has two related aspects. The first focuses on the materiality of politeness: the selling of ‘polite’ goods and a polite lifestyle. The second centres on advertisements as representations of politeness, signifying and communicating the norms and ideals of politeness to a burgeoning middle class. Here, I draw upon Klein’s critical reading of attempts to juxtapose the ‘polite’ with the ‘productive’ or ‘useful’ – paralleling his analysis of conduct manuals with that of advertisements – but also upon the idea that advertisements are representations of polite society.<sup>20</sup> First, though, I consider politeness as a tool for selling.

### **Polite advertisements**

In 1757 Postlethwayt could argue that ‘however mean and disgraceful it was looked on a few years since ... to apply to the public by advertising in the papers, at present times it seems to be esteemed quite otherwise’.<sup>21</sup> Yet many provincial newspaper advertisements in the second half of the eighteenth century were styled as legitimate notices: a useful device for imparting information about the availability of goods or services, whilst avoiding the impression of vulgar self-promotion. For a significant if slightly declining minority, this legitimisation came explicitly: often in announcements of a change to trading arrangements (see Table 1). Some announced relocation into or within a town. Thus, the Liverpool silk mercer, P. Prichard, informed readers that ‘he is now removed from his old warehouse opposite the Exchange, to the house last in the possession of Mr. Lawton in Fenwick-street’.<sup>22</sup> Others announced their return from London, either with fashionable new stock or, in the case of dancing masters for example, for the coming season.<sup>23</sup> Others again informed the reader of

retirements or post-mortem arrangements: John Ryder, a surgeon and apothecary in Bridgnorth, announced that ‘after more than thirty years successful Practice, he has resigned his Business to his Son, JOHN RYDER, Junior’.<sup>24</sup>

All these advertisers sought to remain within the bounds of polite behaviour by explaining their reason for advertising. Ryder also sought to retain customer loyalty. The importance of such continuity, and the more generally apparent desire to locate a new business relative to established retailers and professionals, underlines the importance of reputation to success in eighteenth-century business. Many transactions depended on the easy flow of credit, and credit relationships were mediated by trust, which was itself central to the construction of long-term customer relationships.<sup>25</sup> Trust and reputation were generally seen as being built up through years of honest trading and by providing higher quality goods at fair prices. Once established, reputation could be cemented and traded upon by issuing trade cards to privileged customers. The elaborate images contained on these cards underscored the quality and reputation of the tradesman.<sup>26</sup> This could be further enhanced by announcing aristocratic or royal patronage, a practice which became more widespread in the early nineteenth century. Merridew, the Warwick bookseller and stationer, proclaimed that he was ‘Old and New Bookseller, General and Fancy Stationer, to their Royal Highnesses the Princess Augusta and Dutchess of Gloucester’. He also illustrated his trade card with an image of the castle and the town, aligning himself with the local aristocracy and with Warwick as an archetype of polite provincial society.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, some advertisers clearly felt that they could short-circuit this process by drawing on the good name of more established retailers and professionals. In marking his location during the Coventry fair as being ‘next door to Mr Remington’s, near the Cross’, William Cart was clearly doing more than simply providing directions to the shop: reference to the Cross would have been sufficient.<sup>28</sup> Rather, he was drawing on the status of an established tradesman. As a visitor, and therefore unknown to potential customers in the town, such an ‘introduction’ would have held real benefits. Reputation could also be inherited. Advertising his intention to ‘follow the Business of a WHARFINGER’, Richard Ainge of Letchlade in Gloucestershire re-assured potential customers that this was ‘an Occupation wherein his late Grandfather and Father were engaged’.<sup>29</sup> In a similar manner,

John Ryder's advertisement was an attempt to pass on something of his good name to his son, but he underscored the reputation of the latter by adding that 'to improve the Knowledge he had acquired at home, [he] has been a considerable Time in the Hospitals at Paris'.<sup>30</sup> Such 'training' was seen as important in enhancing reputation. Many advertisements sought kudos by referring to time spent in London, whilst others emphasised their prestigious former employers, as did Joseph Hall, 'late Coachman to the Right Hon. the Lord St John and to Sir Edmund Isham, Bart.', when he announced his move to the Black Boy Inn, Northampton.<sup>31</sup>

Such attempts to link tradesmen and women to the social elite were widespread, with around one-fifth of the advertisements surveyed being addressed to the gentry and/or nobility (see Table 1).<sup>32</sup> Some advertisers undoubtedly had ambitions to supply such prime consumers with goods and services. J. Meller's appeal to the nobility and gentry of Knutsford and its environs may have accurately reflected at least a proportion of his customer base. Much the same was probably true of John Bell, who offered a private education for the sons of 'Gentlemen, Ladies and Others', and Lockett, a hairdresser and perfumer in Northampton, who addressed his advertisement to the 'Nobility and Gentry'.<sup>33</sup> For others, the appeal looks rather optimistic. It is doubtful, for instance, that the gentry comprised a large proportion of those patronising the classes of two rival dancing masters in late eighteenth-century Blackburn.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, it is unlikely that the gentry were the intended target of these or many of the other advertisements which apparently aimed to solicit their custom. As with the 'useful manuals' studied by Klein, it is more likely that the real target were those members of the middling sorts with the opportunity for, or pretensions to, upward social mobility.<sup>35</sup> Addressing notices to the gentry associated both the shopkeeper and their customers with the local elite. Reading these advertisements, the middling sorts could imagine themselves to be part of a wider grouping comprising the nobility, gentry, merchants and 'others'. In short, they could position themselves within polite society. Given the increasing fluidity of status titles through the eighteenth century, they might even see themselves to be part of the gentry. Thus we can see such salutations as part of the careful wording of advertisements which were, as Barker observes, 'almost always couched in a particular form of polite, deferential language'.<sup>36</sup>



Many advertisements expressed thanks for past ‘favours’ and the hope of further patronage which would be warranted by their assiduous attention to the needs of the customer. Sometimes, the formula was quite simple, as when Elizabeth Shepherd, in an advertisement clearly aimed in part at her deceased husband’s former customers, stated that she ‘humbly hopes for the continuance of their favours, which will always be most gratefully acknowledged’.<sup>37</sup> Most tradesmen and women went further, both in their use of language and in the ways in which they proposed to treat their loyal customers. The gardener and seedsman, James Hughes, expressed both thanks for ‘the encouragement he has met with, and hopes for the Continuance of their Favours, which shall be his chief Study to merit’.<sup>38</sup> This active cultivation of customers was common amongst professionals and shopkeepers alike. The dancing master, Mr. Winder, advertised his return to Blackburn for the season, writing that he ‘humbly solicits their Patronage and support’, and that he ‘will use all of the Exertions in his Power to render himself worthy of their Favours [sic.], by paying every Attention to those Children who shall be committed to his Care’.<sup>39</sup> Occasionally, the advertiser would wax lyrical. James Backarn of Chester announced:

That he hath purchased the Stock in Trade of MR JOHN WATSON, late of the same City, HAIR-MERCHANT, deceased, and purposes carrying on the same with diligence, assiduity, and integrity; humbly soliciting the favours of the customers of the deceased, and all others who have occasion for any thing in that branch of business; craving permission to assure such as shall be pleased to favour him with their orders, that it shall be his constant study to prepare and provide the best goods, and execute the same with fidelity, care, and expedition.<sup>40</sup>

The use of such flattering language – and specifically the hope for future favours – rose markedly in the 1780s and 1790s, when it characterised well over one-quarter of advertisements (Table 1). Another form of flattery, the practice of signing off an advertisement as ‘your humble servant’ or ‘your obedient servant’, showed no such secular increase over time. Yet it featured in up to 20 per cent of advertisements in some of newspapers sampled. Whilst particularly marked amongst those offering personal services – innkeepers, schoolmasters, druggists, hairdressers and dancing masters all used this phrase – it was also a feature of shopkeepers’ advertisements, from silk mercers to gunsmiths.

This kind of formalised, polite language and the flattery being extended towards the reader furthered the construction of the genteel or polite customer. It was echoed in the ornate trade cards issued by some shopkeepers in the eighteenth century and in the face-to-face interaction which took place within the shop, when retailers and professionals dealt with their customers in person.<sup>41</sup> On trade cards, words were augmented by images, but these too could be read by those to whom they were given – an educated group, well versed in interpreting the imagery of print culture. Trade cards thus offered scope for more complex and nuanced messages, many of which were infused with the visual imagery of polite taste.<sup>42</sup> In the mid eighteenth century, this was most evident in those structured as cartouches; the goods on offer being arranged within and around fashionable rococo frames. The elegance of the overall design and the assumed understanding of the allusions to tasteful modes of ornamentation served to flatter the customer as educated and discerning. By the 1780s, these abstract designs were replaced by classical imagery, incorporating elegant female figures, cherubs, or urns and vases,<sup>43</sup> which acted as identifiable icons of polite sensibility and taste. The approach with these trade cards is more subtle than that of newspaper advertisements, and the relationship between shopkeeper and customer is more obviously one of cultural equality (since both are part of the same discriminating group), but the effect is very similar.

The social implications of this polite discourse are difficult to judge. Barker has suggested that it conferred a ‘degree of servility’ on male but interestingly not female traders.<sup>44</sup> However, I would argue that the use of courteous and flattering forms of address did not imply subservience. Shopkeepers were not grovelling to a customer base comprising the gentry, but rather were making themselves (and their advertisements) part of the process whereby politeness and polite society was configured – or perhaps reconfigured. As Defoe noted, the model shopkeeper was ‘the most obliging, most gentleman-like, of a tradesman’.<sup>45</sup> If this meant adopting the language or ‘patrician manners’ of the elites, it took place within a broader marrying up of polite and commercial worlds, rather than as part of process whereby one was made subservient to the other.<sup>46</sup> This intersection of politeness and commerce can be seen in the practice of addressing advertisements to ‘friends’ and ‘the public’: differentiating a set of privileged (and self-identifying) customers from the general reader. Friends

were valued customers with whom personal bonds were strong: the sort of person who might receive one of the ornate trade cards or be invited into the backspace of the shop.<sup>47</sup> In focusing on these people, shopkeepers looked to cultivate their key customers, but also to create an atmosphere of sociability – a key aspect of polite society.<sup>48</sup> They combined commercial and polite ambitions. Given this, it is significant that advertisements addressed to friends and/or public seem to have become increasingly common as the century progressed, to nearly one-third of advertisements by the 1780s/90s (Table 1). This was true not just for high status retailers, but also more mundane trades. Thus, on the same page of a Liverpool newspaper, a ‘linen-draper and china-man’, Thomas Bromilow, begged ‘leave to acquaint his Friends and the Public, that he had just returned from London’ with a new range of goods, whilst a plumber and glazier, Edward Chambers, took ‘this Method to acquaint his Friends and the Public, that he carries on the said business in all its branches’.<sup>49</sup> Such notices aimed to drum up new business as well as cement established relationships. The public was linked to as well as differentiated from friends: they were given the implicit invitation to (re)define their relationship with the shopkeeper or service-provider, establishing, through their regular custom, their status as ‘friends’ and their part in a circle of quasi-polite sociability.

In reading advertisements in this way, there is a danger of seeing politeness where none was intended by the advertiser or read by the customer. However, the fact that by no means all advertisements were phrased and drawn in polite terms strongly suggests that those that were had been consciously constructed in this way. Some of the notices appearing in newspapers were perfunctory. Christopher Keill, surgeon and man-midwife made no attempt to dress up his advertisement in florid language, merely noting that he ‘Is remov’d from Stratford upon Avon, to his house in the High-street, WARWICK’.<sup>50</sup> Others were little more than prosaic listings of goods. The Wigan nursery and seedsman, William Pinkerton, advertised a ‘valuable stock of young Nursery trees’ – including ash, beech, birch, horse and Spanish chestnut, English and Dutch elm, hornbeam, larch, lime, oak, Weymouth pine, poplar, sycamore, walnut and willow – plus ‘all other kinds of forest and fruit trees, evergreen and flowering shrubs, bass mats, garden seeds, transplanted thorn quicksets &c.’.<sup>51</sup> Here, the goods are allowed to speak for themselves, with little attempt to engage the consumer in polite or

commercial discourse; a formula that echoed that of some trade cards, such as that of John Sibbald.<sup>52</sup> Others again sit uncomfortably next to politely-worded notices for assemblies, mercers' shops or private schools. Remarkable in this context is the advertisement of William Allen who 'KILLS and scalds Suckling Pigs in the cleanest Manner, without the use of Rosin, Aloes or any other Preparation than that of fair Water only, at Three pence each Pig'.<sup>53</sup> But such advertisements were exceptional: the majority drew on and projected ideas of civility, sociability and respectability, reflecting the importance of representing the shop and shopping as integral parts of polite social practice. Yet advertisements did not simply draw on the language and norms of politeness; they also helped to disseminate its material and behavioural underpinnings. It is to this second aspect – the selling of polite goods and practices – that we turn next.

### **Selling politeness**

Advertisements played on the competitive aspect of politeness, appealing to the aspirations of consumers and offering guidance as to how to enter the world of polite consumption. They conveyed direct and powerful references to genteel taste, the rise of fashion, the emergence of new goods, social emulation, and the cultural cache of London – all important aspects of polite material culture. In all, around 15 per cent of the advertisements surveyed made direct reference to fashion, taste or the 'genteel' nature of the goods or services being offered – a figure which remained broadly constant from the 1740s to the 1790s (Table 1). In 1744, Thomas Gwilliam of Worcester described his stock of new and second-hand coaches as being 'neatly carv'd', 'very handsome', and 'made neat and as good as in London'. Twenty-five years later, Mrs Coppell informed her friends that she had 'just purchased a very genteel assortment of goods in the MILLINERY WAY, of the newest taste'.<sup>54</sup> Taste and discernment were central tenets of polite consumption: choosing the correct goods (and buying them from the right places) added kudos and enhanced the social standing of the consumer.<sup>55</sup> Jane Austen famously wrote of Bath that one of its chief attractions were the opportunities it affords for 'learning what was mostly worn, and buying clothes of the latest fashion'.<sup>56</sup> Perusing newspaper advertisements and trade cards allowed the consumer a similar opportunity to survey what was available and

particularly what was newly available. Many shopkeepers announced the arrival of new goods and especially those for the new season. Fashion was most apparent in personal clothing and so mercers, milliners and hairdressers were prominent in their emphasis of the newness and fashionability of their wares. Orton and Co. of Liverpool, for instance, announced that they had ‘already laid in for the spring, great variety of the new colours, and those of the first quality’, whilst Mr Lockett of Northampton, who noted that he had ‘lately been in London to furnish himself with the most fashionable Mode of Dressing now in Practice, by which Means, he hopes to give Satisfaction to those who please to favour him with their future Commands’.<sup>57</sup> Yet the importance of fashion as a selling point penetrated all forms of material culture: L Hall, a Blackburn saddler, cap, whip and harness-maker, informed readers that ‘those who please to favour him with their orders, may depend upon being served with the newest and most fashionable articles’.<sup>58</sup> It also influenced leisure practices, especially those linked to sociability and display. Mr Corbyn, the Blackburn dancing master, was fairly typical, announcing his intention to teach ‘some of the newest and most fashionable dances’.<sup>59</sup>

As Cox and Dannehl argue, references to London heightened the desirability of goods and the perceived quality and fashionability of workmanship.<sup>60</sup> Supplies from the capital were particularly important to mercers, drapers and milliners, and many advertised that they had “just returned from London”, but so too did a wide range of other trades. The druggist J. Wraith, for example, had ‘just received from London, a large quantity of raisin and cowslip wines of excellent qualities’.<sup>61</sup> London supplied more than just goods: references to the metropolis locked the shopkeeper into a network of ideas, knowledge and supply. To Lockett’s hairdressing and Meller’s upholstery – noted earlier – we could add the Chester gunsmith William Meredith noted that he had ‘lately been in London, where he had an Opportunity of being thoroughly instructed, and has brought down with him the most approved Methods’.<sup>62</sup> The multi-faceted importance of London is made clearer still by the Liverpool mercer, P. Prichard, who announced that:

he has just come down from London with as great a variety of the different new patterns calculated for the spring, as the earliness of the season would admit of, and will make a point of

furnishing himself, by all the weekly conveyances, with such others, and those of the most elegant fancy, that are now making for the approaching months.<sup>63</sup>

This highlights the rapid turnover in fashion, and the position of London as the main supply centre for fashionable goods. It also emphasises that Prichard was well-placed to supply consumers with both knowledge of the latest trends and the goods themselves. He was, in effect, a conduit for key elements of the material culture of politeness. More than that, his advertisement stressed the importance of regular attendance at his shop in order to keep up with the latest developments in taste and fashion. The shopkeeper was thus cast a tastemaker, whilst reading advertisements and visiting the shop allowed consumers to produce and reproduce themselves as polite – adding their own interpretation onto the meaning of the construct. In a similar manner, dancing masters trumpeted both their London connections and the ways in which this gave them – and their clients – particularly insights into polite modes of conduct. This is most apparent in the advertisement of Mr Durack ‘some Time since one of the principal Dancers in the Opera-House, London’. He taught ‘Minuets, Cotillions, Country Dances, Slingby’s, Allamonds; and, if required, the Louvre, Rigadoon, Pasby, and Brittan’. But he also instructed his pupils in ‘the Art of an EASY ADDRESS’ that lay at the heart of polite sociability.<sup>64</sup>

The newspaper advertisements of shopkeepers, dancing masters and other provincial traders heightened awareness not simply of where (polite) goods and services could be acquired, but also helped to define the parameters of polite consumption through their emphasis on fashion, taste, newness and ‘easy address’. They projected these ideals onto a reading public comprising the gentry and middling sorts who, of course, brought to bear their own understandings of politeness and polite behaviour.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, trade cards also sought to construct and sell politeness through allusions to fashion and taste. Many of those produced in the middle decades of the eighteenth century featured a profusion of goods. Some illustrated the range of stock carried by a retailer; others indicated the variety of products available from a manufacturer.<sup>66</sup> The depiction of goods might be somewhat stylised, but many attempted to provide accurate and realistic representations.<sup>67</sup> Cards such as that of George Finlay, the Glasgow wright and trunk maker, were ‘transmitters of fashionable forms, like the pattern books with which they are so closely associated’.<sup>68</sup> They gave favoured customers a glimpse of

what could be acquired and communicated broader ideas of what forms and styles were in fashion. Trade cards also portrayed polite practices, especially those involving polite consumption. Berg and Clifford describe how confectioners' trade cards incorporated 'serving suggestions' for their goods and 'ideas for the artistic layout of the table'.<sup>69</sup> Other retailers depicted the process of inspecting and selecting goods – the browsing in Berry's browse-bargain model of polite consumption. The trade cards of Dorothy Mercier and Masefield, for instance, show well-dressed shoppers leisurely perusing the wares being shown to them by the shopkeeper. That for Wright's circulating library depicts a mixed company of fashionable men and women in a library or bookshop, possibly discussing the books laid out on the table in front of them.<sup>70</sup> These portrayals are echoed in the later cards of provincial retailers such as Lillington's 'Hosiery, Glove and London Hat Warehouse' in Worcester, where we can see fashionably-dressed customers being served by one of the shop assistants.<sup>71</sup> By depicting such practices, trade cards carried an image of the shop into the home of the consumer, they promoted the polite and fashionable credentials of the trader; but also spread awareness and recognition of these modes of behaviour. In effect, they promoted polite consumption.

In contrast to this emphasis on taste, fashion and politeness, the idea of luxury was absent from printed advertisements. It may well have been an important incentive to consume, but was seldom used as a selling point by provincial advertisers. If the quality of goods were noted, it was in terms of their workmanship or authenticity. William Cart presented a long list of stock when announcing his imminent arrival in Coventry, including:

Muslins of al sorts, flower'd, strip'd and plain gauze, flower'd, strip'd and plain lawns, silks and satins, all colours, Barcelona and Sarcenet Handkerchiefs, Catgut and Paris nett, Linen Handkerchiefs, Sufeer ditto, Silk and cotton hats of the newest fashion, great variety of drest caps, in the newest taste; new Ranelagh Cloaks, figur'd and plain ribbons of the choicest patterns, Minionet and trolley laces, Edgeing and footings, all sorts of Women's Leather Gloves and Mitts...Boys silk and sattin Hats and Caps, with feather for ditto, Garnet and Pearl necklaces and earrings, French and English ditto, Garnet and Paskes Hair pins and crosses, Italian flowers and Egret with every other Article in the Haberdashery and millinery way.<sup>72</sup>

But this was not just a question of variety. Cart emphasised the quality of his goods – garnet and pearl necklaces and earrings, Ranelegh cloaks, printed cloths – and their genuine or cosmopolitan nature: Barcelona handkerchiefs, French necklaces, Paris net and Italian flowers. Such notions of authenticity were clearly important to perspicacious consumers: they signalled taste and distinguished them from others who lay outside the privileged circle of polite discernment. In this way, they played on the competitive aspect of politeness: that is, as a behavioural code which sought exclusivity and differentiation as much as inclusivity and integration. The importance of provenance and authenticity is clearer still in the notice placed by M. Campione to advertise his visit to Liverpool in 1770. It was headlined, ‘Just arrived from ABROAD’ – a reference to both Campione (an Italian) and his stock of prints and statues. What is of particular note here is his claim that the prints were ‘after the best masters, viz. Carlo Maratti, Raphael, Hanabel Carache, Andrea Sacchi, Dominichino, Poussin, Coreggio, Rembrandt, P.P. Reubens, Antonio, Vandyke, and others’; and that the statues were ‘modelled from the Antiques of Italy’. Campione’s advertisement worked in at least three ways. At one level, he was drawing on the artistic understanding of his likely customers – those with the education, inclination and money to agree that these would be ‘the greatest ornaments for halls, parlours, staircases, book-cases, dining-rooms, chimney-pieces, summer houses, &c.’.<sup>73</sup> A certain level of knowledge would be required to appreciate the list of painters and to recognise them as producing the kind of image which would be appropriate in a polite and fashionable house. At a second level, he was playing on the aspirational and inclusive nature of politeness. These were prints and plaster copies of the kind of paintings and statues being collected by the gentry and aristocracy on the Grand Tour. Campione’s customers would most likely have comprised those without the means to acquire original works of art or to travel overseas. Yet they could achieve a similar effect by purchasing his copies. At a third level, he was relying on the authority that came with his own pedigree and the provenance of his goods. Even if consumers did not appreciate that these were ‘the best masters’, here was an Italian, with artwork imported from France and Italy, telling them that these were desirable and tasteful objects. In this way, we can see the potential of advertisements to sell both the material trappings and the wider ideal of politeness as a marker of social standing.



In selling politeness in these ways, provincial advertisers did not shy away from references to commercialism. Alongside the use of deferential language and the promise of new and fashionable goods, a growing minority of newspaper advertisements contained information on the pricing of goods (Table 1). Whilst Berry notes the emergence of fixed prices and cash sales as a feature of the late eighteenth century, such references were a feature of advertisements from a much earlier period. Already in the 1740s, William Hool of Oxford was advertising the price of his stock of wines and spirits, requiring a deposit on bottles and payment in cash.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, those advertising prices or trumpeting the cheapness of their stock were by no means a separate breed of retailer. Indeed, the coupling of fashion, quality and price was often explicit. William Cart promised ‘as neat Goods, and as cheap as they can be bought in any warehouse in London’; Orton and Co. listed prices for the ‘great variety of new colours’ that they had ‘laid in for the spring’, and William Meredith offered his work ‘in the neatest and best manner, and at the most reasonable terms’.<sup>75</sup> The importance of price – or at least the assurance that the cost of goods and services was ‘reasonable’, ‘moderate’ or ‘prime’ – was clearly seen as a selling point, even by those aiming at a polite clientele.

This marrying of commerce and politeness is also seen in the way in which advertisements sometimes portrayed their subjects as being both polite and useful. As Klein argues, “‘Politeness’ was ornamentation, to be sure, but a necessary and useful form of ornamentation’: that is, it served a purpose.<sup>76</sup> Doing things ‘correctly’ added to their impact and value. This is apparent in an advertisement for *The Practical Grammar* which read:

The necessity of being perfectly well acquainted with our native language is universally acknowledged ... The embellishment of being a grammarian is obvious from the ridiculous figure those make who do not understand the construction of the tongue they daily use. He who cannot speak correctly is unfit for conversation; he who cannot write correctly is unfit for business: from correctness springs elegance of expression and composition: an accomplishment more useful and more admired than any in the circle of what is deemed polite and ornamental.<sup>77</sup>

These sentiments link personal accomplishments directly with an Addisonian notion of politeness as a means of oiling the wheels of commercial and social interaction. Correct and elegant modes of

expression were portrayed as a necessary pre-requisite to any claim to enter polite or indeed commercial urban society. Importantly, these modes of expression could be learned by anyone so inclined: politeness was open to those with the money, time and inclination to conform to its material and behavioural norms. And such polish, however it was acquired, stands in stark contrast with occasional but telling references to rural vulgarity. This is nicely illustrated by a note appearing in the column next to the advertisement for the *Practical Grammar* which read: ‘The following was taken from a Shew Board in a Country Village in Yorkshire:- Wrihten and readen and trew spellin and also marchants accounts with dowble enterey taut hear – N.B. Girlls and Bouys boorded and good youzitch for children’.<sup>78</sup> The contrast could hardly be clearer.

### **Representations of politeness**

In focusing on the importance of advertisements in selling polite goods and services, emphasis is placed on advertising as a functional tool: communicating market information. However, as noted earlier, it is also possible to see advertisements as representations of polite society, carrying discourses of polite consumption beyond the shop and onto the printed page. They can be read as signifiers of much broader ideas and processes; a kind of commercial short hand for politeness.

At a basic level, the long lists of goods found in some newspaper advertisements and trade cards can be seen as representations of the world of goods. They paralleled the experience of visiting shops by presenting the reader with a cornucopia, exciting the imagination with the possibilities that this afforded, as well as communicating commercial information about availability, variety and choice. Trade cards added a visual dimension. Sometimes these were accompanied by prosaic listings, but, as we have seen earlier, they appeared more often in the form of a collaged image of fashionable goods. The use of visual metaphors also allowed shopkeepers to communicate far more complex messages through their trade cards. The stock figure of the Chinese person with tea chests and ginger jars appears on the cards of many grocers and tea dealers. That of Samuel Daniell of Stourbridge is fairly

typical: the central figure, together with the pagodas, coolies and junks in the background affirms the provenance and authenticity of the produce, whilst adding an aspect of the exotic to what were, by the late eighteenth century, widespread and increasingly mundane commodities.<sup>79</sup> This notion of authenticity is carried a stage further, and linked back to polite social practices, in the trade card of Joseph Ward of Coventry.<sup>80</sup> Here, the single figure is replaced by a group of Chinese people taking tea, whilst alongside them the figure of a black 'native' smokes a long earthenware pipe. The image signals these as exotic goods and their consumption is part of a set of 'authentic' practices to which the polite consumer was connected through their own china tea services and rituals of tea drinking.<sup>81</sup> It thus represents a set of relationships and values linking international trade, consumption, politeness and Eurocentrism.

Rituals of tea drinking required the assemblage of appropriate commodities and behaviours. The notion that certain sets of goods belonged together was fundamental to the fashion for collecting – marking the cognoscenti from the mere accumulator of things – and to fashion itself.<sup>82</sup> Wedgwood drew strongly on this idea in his London showrooms, using a model dining room laid out with a full dinner service to inform customers how new items should be properly incorporated into an accepted set of table ware. There is evidence that provincial retailers operated in a similar way from at least the 1730s. The Chester upholsterer, Abner Scholes placed furniture in a series of co-ordinated assemblages in a large galleried showroom.<sup>83</sup> These groupings were apparently laid out to resemble rooms, often including a bed, chairs, screens and accessories such as looking glasses or prints. Such attempts to portray sets of fashionable goods inevitably spilled over into printed advertisements which emphasised the importance of 'completeness' in assemblages.<sup>84</sup> Auctions of household goods often comprised long and detailed inventories of the items for sale. Fairly typical was that of the 'entire HOUSEHOLD GOODS and FURNITURE, LINEN, CHINA and other EFFECTS of the Reverend RICHARD PARRY, D.D., late Minister of MARKET HARBOROUGH'.<sup>85</sup> This included chintz hangings, mahogany tables, japanned furniture, tea and table china, and pier and dressing glasses. The object in listing these goods was to draw in buyers in pursuit of good furniture at low prices, but a side effect was to offer a snapshot of a polite domestic interior. It communicated to those who read the

advertisement, as well as those who visited the house of the late Reverend Parry to view and buy goods, how the certain assemblages of material goods were a short-hand for polite and respectable living. Trade cards achieved a similar effect, often more consciously. Those illustrating the goods on offer, even when they are arranged in an abstract manner around a rococo frames, give the clear impression that these are items that belonged together. Sometimes, the groupings are made more explicit, as with the card of Mary Rollason and Sons, which illustrates an idealised showroom containing fashionable pieces arranged as if in a dining room, albeit a rather full one. There are chandeliers, ornamental vases and tea services arranged on side tables and a central table laid with tureens, salvers and serving dishes.<sup>86</sup> Here we can see that the function of the advertisement is not merely as an attempt to symbolise a fashionable shop, but much more broadly as a conscious representation of polite material culture. They were selling an idea and an ideal as much as specific goods.

Much the same could be argued for trade cards that portrayed the act of shopping. Those of Mercier, Masefield, Lillington and others brought together politeness and commerce in the space of the shop and the body of the shopkeeper. They represented polite consumption, reinforcing specific consumer practices, but also symbolising a wider culture of politeness. Through the dress of those pictured; their body forms, postures and implied movements (important elements of polite demeanour<sup>87</sup>), and the group dynamics and interaction portrayed, these illustrations formed a carefully constructed image of politeness. However, one of the most powerful images of politeness contained on a trade card was far more abstract. It drew its strength from the allusions that it made to wider print culture and the assumed understanding of this by those receiving and reading the card. In an interesting twist on the Chinese tea motif, the trade card of Henry Waterfall's 'Provision Warehouse', places a classical female figure in the midst of a pastoral rural scene.<sup>88</sup> The image cleverly draws on the growing fashion for pastoral scenes – the type of engraving or painting that would adorn the walls of polite customers to whom Waterfall's card was directed – but the specific point of reference is clear. A windmill appears in place of the pagoda, whilst sacks of grain, barrels of butter and ham replace the tea chests and ginger jars. The allusion is clear and deliberate, yet its success relies upon

the consumer being aware of both idioms. The illustration thus operates at a number of levels: an advertisement for the goods, a visual pun, and a fashionable image which drew on and reinforced notions of taste and polite discernment. It was, in effect, a representation of politeness.

Despite the complex allusions drawn by Waterfall, trade cards existed in physical isolation from other advertisements. In contrast, notices placed in newspapers by shopkeepers and professionals were subject to a very particular type of contextualisation. They appeared alongside other advertisements for stagecoaches to and from London; assemblies, public lectures and music concerts; genteel houses for sale or rent; newly published books and almanacs; horses available for stud; items lost or stolen, from dogs to silver watches, and so on. In practical terms, this matrix of advertisements helped to sell polite goods and practices; indicating what was available in specific places at particular times. In effect, the newspaper page plotted the polite terrain of the locality for the reader in a very spatial manner. More conceptually, it also offered a programme for polite consumerism: one that incorporated material culture, behaviour and values. It was both useful and polite: a guide to practice and a normative agenda.

## **Conclusions**

Let us return to where we began: Mellor's notice to the gentry and nobility of Knutsford and its environs. As an archetype of the kind of advertisement I have been discussing here, it illustrates the polite and commercial nature of eighteenth-century advertising. Shopkeepers such as Mellor sought to sell through politeness: they drew on polite language and idioms to create a positive impression of themselves and their goods and services. This did not reflect a pervading inferiority to socially-superior customers or a higher culture, but rather a wider engagement in politeness, with shopkeepers attempting to integrate themselves and their middling sort of customers through linguistic devices and the adoption of polite conventions. This was civility, not servility. Moreover, advertisements were not just polite; they were also useful. Advertisers sought to increase sales, in part by encouraging the purchase and thus the diffusion of a material culture of politeness. Like Mellor, they stressed the newness, neatness and fashionable nature of their wares. They played on the idea of taste and

discernment as a means of social differentiation, portraying themselves as central to the acquisition of goods and personal attributes that could mark out the individual as polite and respectable. In doing so, they also promoted the broader notion of politeness as a normative culture: it was a set of values to which any self-respecting individual would wish to conform. In this respect, it is possible to see some eighteenth-century advertisements as representations of politeness. They symbolised polite culture through their depiction of goods and activities; their allusions to polite sensibilities and tastes, and their collaging of polite material culture, behaviour and values. This is not to argue that advertisements were divorced from the material world of goods – indeed, they were material products themselves. But they did comprise a kind of ‘representational order’ for politeness: replete with well-recognised symbols and allusions. Not only were goods given life through advertising; they increasingly spoke for themselves in a language which drew on and developed a particular set of commercial/polite semiotics. They productively occupied the intersection between the polite and the commercial.

Table 1. Selected polite themes/language appearing in newspaper advertisements, 1742-94 <sup>a</sup>

Subject of advertisement	1740s		1770s		1780s/90s		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Legitimation	15	25.4	33	20.4	19	18.8	67	20.7
Reputation of shopkeeper	6	10.2	33	20.4	10	9.9	49	15.2
Addressing gentry	15	25.4	25	15.3	25	24.8	65	20.1
Humble/obedient servant	10	17.0	16	9.8	17	16.8	43	13.3
Seeking favours	10	17.0	32	19.6	29	28.7	71	22.0
Addressing friends	0	0.0	40	24.5	31	30.7	71	22.0
Addressing the public	4	6.8	42	25.8	27	26.7	73	22.6
Fashion/taste	7	11.9	28	17.2	13	12.9	48	14.9
London	2	3.4	18	11.0	12	11.9	32	9.9
Price of goods	8	13.6	24	14.7	19	18.8	51	15.8
Total number of adverts	59		163		101		323	

Note. Advertisements could have more than one subject

Sources: *Adams Weekly Courant*, 1780; *Blackburn Mail*, 1793-94; *Gore's Liverpool Advertiser*, 1770; *Northampton Mercury* 1743-44, 1780; *Worcester Journal*, 1742-52

<sup>a</sup> This work forms part of a wider study of consumption in eighteenth-century provincial towns, supported by *The Leverhulme Trust* (award F/00732/A). The broader project gathered data on a large number of towns spread across the Midlands and north-west England, from which was taken the smaller sample used in the present analysis. The basic requirement was that the sample towns needed to have an extant and accessible newspaper in the eighteenth century, but this is true of a good number of towns in these regions, from Manchester to Middlewich. More particularly, then, the towns were chosen to reflect a range of different types of urban community: large county towns with wide hinterlands (Worcester and Chester); smaller and county towns with more restricted spheres of influence (Northampton); large commercial towns (Liverpool), and growing manufacturing centres (Blackburn). They were thus intended to be broadly representative of provincial England and provincial shopkeepers. Other towns could, of course, have been selected and, without other studies of particular communities or a much broader survey of provincial newspapers as a genre, it is impossible to know the extent to which the findings presented here are, indeed, representative or whether they are a product of the sample chosen. That said, whilst advertisements were most numerous and least gentry-oriented in the Liverpool press – probably a reflection of the size of the town and its commercial character – their language, structure and content showed considerable consistency across the different towns. Newspapers undoubtedly reflected the character of their communities, but this does not seem to have cut across, to any significant extent, the nature of the advertisements they carried for shops and services.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> *Adams Weekly Courant*, 28 November 1775.

<sup>2</sup> See Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989); Jon Stobart, Andrew Hann and Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption. Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c.1680-1830* (London, 2007); Paul Langford, *Polite and Commercial People. England 1727-1783* (Oxford, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> For fuller discussion of this idea, see: Helen Berry, 'Polite Consumption: Shopping in Eighteenth-Century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), 375-94.

<sup>4</sup> Laurence Klein, 'Politeness for Plebes. Consumption and Social Identity in Early Eighteenth-Century England', in John Brewer and Anne Bermingham (eds) *The Culture of Consumption: Image, Object, Text* (London, 1995), p. 364; A.A. Copper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence Klein (Cambridge, 1999), p. 31; Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 6, 41, 234; Woodruff Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability, 1600-1800*, (London, 2002), pp. 41-3.

<sup>5</sup> Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter. Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, 1998), p. 202. See also Laurence Klein, 'Politeness for Plebes', pp. 367-71; Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (Harlow, 2002), chapter 2; Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, pp. 219-46.

<sup>6</sup> Roey Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), 355-7; Laurence Klein, 'Coffeehouse Civility, 1660-1714: An Aspect of Post-Courtly Culture in England', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 59 (1997), 30-51; Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, pp. 263-83.

<sup>7</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 233.

<sup>8</sup> Robin Walker, 'Advertising in London Newspapers, 1650-1750', *Business History*, xvi (1973), 112-30; Neil McKendrick, 'George Packwood and the Commercialisation of Shaving: the Art of Eighteenth-Century Advertising' in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and John Plumb (eds), *The Birth of a Consumer Society* (London, 1982), pp. 146-96; Hoh-Cheung Mui and Lorna Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> Christine Ferdinand, 'Selling it to the Provinces: News and Commerce Round Eighteenth-Century Salisbury', in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds) *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), p. 398; Hannah Barker, *The Business of Women. Female Enterprise and urban Development in Northern England, 1760-1830*



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(Oxford, 2006), pp. 78-9; Nancy Cox and Karin Dannehl, *Perceptions of Retailing in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2007), p. 75.

<sup>10</sup> Ferdinand, 'Selling it to the Provinces', pp. 399-402; Barker, *Business of Women*, p. 80; McKendrick, 'George Packwood'.

<sup>11</sup> Clemens Wischermann, 'Placing Advertising in the Modern Cultural History of the City', in Clemens Wischermann and Elliot Shore (eds), *Advertising and the European City: Historical Perspectives* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> For a brief discussion, see: Wischermann, 'Placing Advertising', pp.15-25. More detailed analysis can be found in Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England. Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford, California, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, 'Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century: Advertising and the Trade Card in Britain and France' *Cultural and Social History*, 4 (2007), 155; Cox and Dannehl, *Perceptions of Retailing*, pp. 71-4.

<sup>14</sup> On the shop interior and displays as advertisement, see: Claire Walsh, 'Shop Design and the Display of Goods in Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of Design History*, 8 (1995), 157-76; Andrew Hann and Jon Stobart, 'Sites of Consumption: the Display of Goods in Provincial Shops in Eighteenth-Century England', *Cultural and Social History*, 2 (2005), 165-87.

<sup>15</sup> Wischermann, 'Placing Advertising', p. 23. See also Richards, *Commodity Culture*, pp. 17-72. Some caution is needed here, in that goods were being advertised as 'British' well before the end of the eighteenth century. They thus drew on broader cultural and political constructs rather than simply detailing the goods qua goods.

<sup>16</sup> Barker, *Business of Women*, p. 72.

<sup>17</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 233.

<sup>18</sup> Barker, *Business of Women*, pp. 72-89; Helen Berry, 'Promoting Taste in the Provincial Press: National and Local Culture in Eighteenth-Century Newcastle-upon-Tyne', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 25 (2002), 1-17; Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, pp. 270-78 (see also Berg and Clifford, 'Selling Consumption', p. 161); Walsh, 'Shop Design'.

<sup>19</sup> For discussion of the newspapers sampled, see the note with Table 1.

<sup>20</sup> Klein, 'Politeness for Plebes', pp. 367-71; Wischermann, 'Placing Advertising', pp. 22-3. See also Jon Stobart, Andrew Hann and Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption. Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c.1680-1830* (London, 2007), chapter 7.

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- <sup>21</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Directory of Trade and Commerce* (second edition, London, 1757), p. 22.
- <sup>22</sup> *Gore's Liverpool Advertiser*, 9 February 1770.
- <sup>23</sup> For examples of the latter, see: *Adams Weekly Courant*, 23 January 1775; *Blackburn Mail*, 18 September 1793.
- <sup>24</sup> *Worcester Journal*, 6-13 August 1742.
- <sup>25</sup> Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation. The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early-Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 148-72; Patrick Wallis, 'Consumption, Retailing and Medicine in Early-Modern London', *Economic History Review*, 61:1 (2008), 26-53.
- <sup>26</sup> Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, 'Commerce and the Commodity: Graphic Display and Selling New Consumer Goods in Eighteenth-Century England', Michael North and David Ormrod (eds) *Art Markets in Europe, 1400-1800* (Aldershot, 1998), p. 187-200.
- <sup>27</sup> British Museum (BM), Banks Collection 17.69, (MY17 - MRR).
- <sup>28</sup> *Jopson's Coventry Mercury*, 15 June 1767.
- <sup>29</sup> *Worcester Journal*, 6-13 August 1744.
- <sup>30</sup> *Worcester Journal*, 6-13 August 1742.
- <sup>31</sup> *Northampton Mercury*, 5 March 1744. On the importance of London, see the following section of this paper and Cox and Dannehl, *Perceptions of Retailing*, pp. 109-11.
- <sup>32</sup> The proportion drops notably in the 1770s, possibly because of the rather different market targeted by Liverpool tradesmen. Notices directed specifically at ladies were less frequent, generally being placed by silk mercers or those establishing schools.
- <sup>33</sup> *Worcester Journal*, 25 January 1750; *Northampton Mercury*, 22 May 1780.
- <sup>34</sup> *Blackburn Mail*, 2 October 1793.
- <sup>35</sup> Klein, 'Politeness for Plebes', pp. 371-2.
- <sup>36</sup> Barker, *Business of Women*, p. 81.
- <sup>37</sup> *Gore's Liverpool Advertiser*, 26 October 1770.
- <sup>38</sup> *Adams Weekly Courant*, 28 November 1775.
- <sup>39</sup> *Blackburn Mail*, 18 September 1793.
- <sup>40</sup> *Gore's Liverpool Advertiser*, 2 February 1770.

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- <sup>41</sup> Berry, 'Polite Consumption', pp. 388-91; Elizabeth Kowalski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1997), pp. 79-98.
- <sup>42</sup> Berg and Clifford, 'Selling Consumer Goods', pp. 191-2; Berg and Clifford, 'Selling Consumption', pp. 147, 162.
- <sup>43</sup> See, for example, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, John Johnson Collection (JJC), Trade Cards 28 (26); JJC, Trade Cards 10 (8b).
- <sup>44</sup> Barker, *Business of Women*, pp. 82-3.
- <sup>45</sup> Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman*, quoted in Klein, 'Politeness for Plebes', p.372.
- <sup>46</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 233; Klein, 'Politeness for Plebes'.
- <sup>47</sup> Berg and Clifford, 'Selling Consumption', pp. 149-51; Nancy Cox, *The Complete Tradesman: A Study of Retailing, 1550-1820* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 127-39.
- <sup>48</sup> See Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, pp. 267-82.
- <sup>49</sup> *Gore's Liverpool Advertiser*, 20 April 1770.
- <sup>50</sup> *Worcester Journal*, 8-15 June 1744.
- <sup>51</sup> *Blackburn Mail*, 20 November 1793.
- <sup>52</sup> Bodleian Library, JJC, Booktrade: Lancashire.
- <sup>53</sup> *Worcester Journal*, 19-26 October 1744.
- <sup>54</sup> *Worcester Journal*, 18-25 May 1744; *Gore's Liverpool Advertiser*, 1 June 1770. In addition, there were numerous advertisements across the study period for 'genteel residences' available to let or for sale.
- <sup>55</sup> See Berry, 'Promoting Taste'; Gudrun Andersson, 'A Mirror of Oneself: Possessions and the Manifestation of Status among a Local Swedish Elite, 1650-1770', *Cultural and Social History*, 3 (2006), 21-44 and, more generally, Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London, 1986).
- <sup>56</sup> Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (1818), quoted in Towner, *Recreation and Tourism*, p. 83.
- <sup>57</sup> *Gore's Liverpool Advertiser*, 9 February 1770; *Northampton Mercury*, 22 May 1780.
- <sup>58</sup> *Blackburn Mail*, 11 September 1793.
- <sup>59</sup> *Blackburn Mail*, 2 October 1793.
- <sup>60</sup> Cox and Dannehl, *Perceptions of Retailing*, pp.109-11.
- <sup>61</sup> *Blackburn Mail*, 19 June 1793.
- <sup>62</sup> *Adams Weekly Courant*, 24 January 1775.
- <sup>63</sup> *Gore's Advertiser*, 23 February 1770.

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<sup>64</sup> *Adams Weekly Courant*, 28 November 1775.

<sup>65</sup> On the readership of provincial newspapers and the circulation of trade cards, see: Ferdinand, 'Selling it to the Provinces', pp. 397-8; Berg and Clifford, 'Selling Consumption', pp. 149-51.

<sup>66</sup> See Cox and Dannehl, *Perceptions of Retailing*, pp. 78-82.

<sup>67</sup> Bodleian Library, JJC, Harding Bookplates, Trade Cards 28 (26).

<sup>68</sup> Berg and Clifford, 'Selling Consumer Goods', p. 196.

<sup>69</sup> Berg and Clifford, 'Selling Consumption', p. 161; Berry, 'Polite Consumption'.

<sup>70</sup> Bodleian Library, JJC, Douce Portfolio, 139 (805); British Museum, Heal Collection; JJC, Douce Portfolio, 139 (808).

<sup>71</sup> See Berg and Clifford, 'Selling Consumption', Figure 4. The original use of the image was probably in Worcester, not Birmingham – thanks to Alison Toplis for pointing out this provenance of the card.

<sup>72</sup> *Jopson's Coventry Mercury*, 15 June 1767

<sup>73</sup> *Gore's Liverpool Advertiser*, 2 November 1770.

<sup>74</sup> *Northampton Mercury*, 29 October 1743.

<sup>75</sup> *Jopson's Coventry Mercury*, 15 June 1767; *Gore's Liverpool Advertiser*, 9 February 1770; *Adams Weekly Courant*, 24 January 1775.

<sup>76</sup> Klein, 'Politeness for Plebes', p.366.

<sup>77</sup> *Adams Weekly Courant*, 23 May 1775.

<sup>78</sup> *Adams Weekly Courant*, 23 May 1775.

<sup>79</sup> Bodleian Library, JJC, Trade Cards 11 (98).

<sup>80</sup> BM, Banks Collection 68.143, (MY17 - WRDJ).

<sup>81</sup> Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, pp.171-5.

<sup>82</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p.251.

<sup>83</sup> CCA, WS 1736 Abner Scholes. For a discussion of this mode of display, see Charles Saumarez-Smith, *Eighteenth-century Decoration and Design in Domestic Interiors in England* (London, 1993), pp.11-13, 132-3

<sup>84</sup> See Cox and Dannehl, *Perceptions of Retailing*, pp.84-6.

<sup>85</sup> *Northampton Mercury*, 27 November 1780.

<sup>86</sup> Bodleian Library, JJC Trade Cards 3 (39).

<sup>87</sup> See Francois. Nivelon, *The Rudiments of Genteel Behaviour* (London, 1737).

<sup>88</sup> Bodleian Library, JJC, Trade Cards 11 (76).